A Traveller in Space and Time: Michael Ayrton, Image Maker.

Daedalus/Icarus Matrix Maquette, Michael Ayrton, © The Artist's Estate

A companion piece to the current exhibition, ***A Singular Obsession***, Dr. Justine Hopkins, art historian and step-granddaughter of Ayrton, will deliver an illustrated lecture, followed by a Q & A.

Friday 24th September 8pm

The Friends Meeting House, High Street, Saffron Walden CB10 1AA

Tickets priced £8 (£6 for National Art Pass holders) can be booked in advance at www.fryartgallery and will be available at the door.

Don't forget that you can follow our news on Facebook and Twitter, as well as our blog at *fryartgallery.blog*

The Fry Art Gallery Too, 9b Museum Street, Saffron Walden, CB10 1BN
01799 520679 www.fryartgallery.org

NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2021

THE FRY ART GALLERY SOCIETY

This is to bring you up to date on what is happening, and what is proposed during the remainder of this year.

Firstly, the usual (and expected?) warning that all our plans are subject to any sudden changes necessary to comply with pandemic regulations. At present these are relaxed, but if there are any changes we can only put them on our website and on the answer phone, and trust that everyone is equally aware of what is afoot and will have anticipated our reaction.

We are now open without the need to make a prior booking. But we do ask, in fairness to the Invigilators and members of the public, that face masks are worn whilst in the enclosed premises of the Gallery. This is a precautionary measure to safeguard against those who are unaware that they are developing the bug. Equally we intend that social distancing should continue to be observed.

More details about the exhibitions and an important lecture follow.

Secondly, the Annual General Meeting will be held on 3rd September in the Friends Meeting House, High Street, Saffron Walden at 7.30pm It will be followed by a talk by Alan Powers, ***Re-cooking the Fry.*** Having worked on a new text for the third edition of ***Artists at the Fry i***ntroductory booklet, Alan Powers reflects on how the story of the Gallery and its artists can be viewed in different ways as it expands in scope. Papers for the AGM are enclosed.

Thirdly, the *Design for a Child's Handkerchief,* briefly mentioned in the May 2021 Newsletter, which is now, in its second printing, available both in the Gallery and on line. This unique piece of merchandising by the Fry Art Gallery Society is described elsewhere in this edition.

Fourthly, a new name has joined those artists who constitute the North West Essex Collection - Gillian Lowndes. More about her and the significant part that she and other potters who lived in North West Essex in the last century played, is the final item.

Fifthly, to correct an error in the last Newsletter. The Annual Sale is to be held in Fry Art Gallery Too on Saturday 20th November and Sunday, 21st November, (not 13th/14th November), from 12pm - 4pm each day. The decision has been made to move this annual event away from the Remembrance Day weekend. The members' Private View will be 11am to noon on Saturday. Full details will be available in the next Newsletter, due out in October.

Sixthly, to report that the new building work got under way in July with the ongoing financial support of members and charitable trusts, for which we are, as ever, profoundly grateful - and encouraged in what has been, from the outset, an uphill task.

The two exhibitions in Fry Too, and an informed lecture.

The remit of the Fry Gallery is to promote awareness about the artistic legacy of North West Essex in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In devising a programme of changing exhibitions each year we try to bring to the fore work by artists who have played a distinctive role alongside the more famous ones like Ravilious, Bawden, Rothenstein, Vaughan et al. In this way over the years we have focussed attention on artists including George Chapman,Tirzah Garwood, Sheila Robinson, Walter Hoyle, Bernard Cheese and Duffy Ayers. Now we find the world is catching up with us, and beginning to re-assess some of these artists.. Tirzah Garwood, who we featured prominently in 2019, comes to mind, and this year we were among the first to mark the centenary of Michael Ayrton, and receive commendation in *Apollo* and *The Times Literary Supplement*. Next year we are planning an exhibition about Isabel Rawsthorne (formerly Lambert), about whom an important work of scholarship has just appeared - *Out of the Cage* by Carol Jacobi (Thames & Hudson), and which will be reviewed in the autumn Newsletter.

The two curators of the exhibitions currently on show, Andrew Jenkins and Michael Clegg, have contributed the following piece:

Exhibitions 2021

No matter how carefully you plan and how early you start the preparations, opening exhibitions at The Fry always seems to go right to the wire. This year, in addition to mounting the usual two exhibitions, we had to contend with turning an unremarkable room in the grounds of Saffron Walden Museum into an art gallery, whilst building work commenced at the main Gallery, and interpreting the Government guidelines surrounding the pandemic. Michael Clegg and Andrew Jenkins curated ***Lithographic Fever – Britain's Mid-Century Print Boom*** and ***A Singular Obsession*** – celebrating the centenary of Michael Ayrton, respectively.

Lithographic Fever looks at the period from the end of the Second World War to the beginning of the swinging sixties when colour lithography became the fashionable way to make prints. It was a phenomenon particularly relevant to the Fry in that artists with a North West Essex connection – some already resident in the area, some who were to move there later – were right at the heart of the national movement. The majority of pictures in the exhibition were selected from the Gallery's permanent collection but close working with a number of lenders, in particular the Arts Council Collection and the Government Art Collection, obtained a number of loans that help place the Fry's work in a wider perspective. Works borrowed from the Arts Council include a print from John Minton, the young star of the post-war art world, an early work from Sheila Robinson, and a lithograph that introduces the German émigré painter and printmaker Fred Uhlman as an Essex artist, given his time living in Bambers Green. The rigorous art-historical scholarship behind the exhibition informs the brochure that is available free to visitors, thanks to an award from the Barbara Whatmore Charitable Trust, and its expanded version on the Gallery website. On the walls of Fry Too, this scholarship has been complemented by Colin Wilkin's eye for an effective hang, creating a display with great visual impact and one which acts as the perfect complement to the Michael Ayrton sculpture, much from a similar period, which it surrounds.

Planning started in 2020 on ***A Singular Obsession.*** We were very fortunate to have the wholehearted support of Dr Justine Hopkins, step-granddaughter to Michael Ayrton, administrator of his estate and torchbearer for all things Ayrton. She granted us unprecedented access to over a dozen bronze sculptures, together with pictures, scrapbooks – even a headdress from an opera – which were gathered from Bristol, Lewes, London and Cambridge. Displaying so many sculptures is fraught with difficulties. How do you display them effectively when your resources are limited? The decision was taken early on to create two large sculpture tables in the centre of the room to take the bulk of the three-dimensional works. Covering our existing storage and display chests with painted plywood seemed the natural route forward and the works were duly installed in early May..To extend the wall space in Fry Too, two large wooden panels were added and the whole room painted in colours more conducive to the display of works of art. Text transfers were added to the walls and information plates were positioned next to the Ayrton works.

Because of the restrictions in place, there was no private view for members and the exhibitions opened quietly to a maximum of 12 pre-booked people per hour. This was then relaxed slightly when some of the restrictions were lifted in July and now pre-booking is no longer required, although numbers will be limited to 12 at any one time and the wearing of face masks encouraged, for the time being.

A Singular Obsession is centred around the myth of the minotaur, which preoccupied Ayrton for many years and inspired paintings, lithographs, drawings and, most effectively, sculpture. This is the first occasion that some of the works have been displayed since Ayrton's untimely death in 1975.

Autumn Lecture

We are fortunate in being able to arrange for Dr Justine Hopkins to deliver a lecture entitled : ***A Traveller in Space and Time: Michael Ayrton, Image Maker*** as an adjunct to the exhibition.

This will be in the Friends Meeting House, High Street Saffron Walden on September 24th at 8pm.Tickets £8, (£6 for National Art Pass holders) are available via the Fry website or at the door.

Design for a Child's Handkerchief by Eric Ravilious

During the Second World War the Cotton Board organised an exhibition to promote the production of cotton goods and invited designers to contribute ideas. Among these was Eric Ravilious. A trial edition of about five of these handkerchiefs are thought to have been produced at the time, and the design remained with his family. In 1989 a small edition was produced by the Judd Street Gallery. This year, thanks to Webb &Webb Design, we have been able to source for the first time a cotton version using the colour Ravilious intended. The first run quickly sold out and a second edition is currently available, tastefully packaged and obtainable in the Gallery or by post for £35 (plus £3.50 for delivery).

At the same time we started an on line sales service, which is gathering momentum, and specialises in items that the Gallery have uniquely produced, and which are accordingly only obtainable through us. (Something worth bearing in mind when doing your Christmas shopping). Alongside the handkerchief also on sale are an apron and cushion cover by Ravilious, and a Bawden cushion cover. Do visit ***fryartgallery.org/online-shop*** if you are unable to call personally.

The enlarged Gallery

IMS Building Solutions started work on site on July 12th. and hope to have finished by the end of January 2022. Planning permission having been obtained in September 2019 and the cost raised, work has now got underway to demolish the various 20th century additions made around the original 1857 building which will then enable a sympathetic infill development to take their place. The intention is to meet the Gallery's needs in the 21st century whilst not only being sensitive to the atmosphere of the building but also externally respecting its location within the Conservation Area. The entrance hall and the main galleries are preserved, but enhanced by the accommodation for storage of the growing Collection, a new linear gallery created and connecting directly with the pathway to Bridge End Gardens thus providing a second, step free, entrance for mobility and prams access as well as a direct route fire escape. There will be a small office for research and administration, and a fully accessible visitors' toilet. Improvements to the heating will also be made.

The contract finally arrived at after discussion and review was for £573,000. The May 2021 Newsletter indicated that the sum then raised amounted to £435,000. The appeal included in that issue resulted in members generously donating a further £52,000, while three charitable Trusts pledged further grants of £40,000, so that only £45,000 remains to be raised between now and the completion of the contract. The Appeal is therefore still open for further donations which may enable this gap to be bridged; if not a small number of members have offered to make interest free loans repayable over the succeeding four years.

The sum the Society was able to add to the appeal was assisted by three legacies during the period. While this is a relatively new experience for us we are appreciative and hope that this practice is often emulated

The Saffron Walden Town Council have been helpful in servicing the land-locked site by making available space for a builders compound on the north west corner of Town Meadows, which their deliverers can access from Catons Lane. The footpath from Castle St which passes the Gallery toward Bridge End Gardens will, in consequence, be closed from 8am - 5pm Monday to Friday while it technically becomes part of the building site. Access to Bridge End Gardens is maintained via Bridge End, and the footpath adjacent to the Eight Bells public house.

Demolition in progress on 3rd August

Help wanted and information given

The last Newsletter produced a response within twenty four hours in our search for help with marbling. We now hope to find somebody who will be prepared to act as the Independent Examiner of our accounts. For the last five years we have enjoyed the *pro bono* services of Nick Caton FCA of Millscott Chartered Accountants, but he would like to hand over this annual task to someone else. Martin Gruselle, our Treasurer would be delighted to hear from anyone willing to take over this role. To discuss, or to offer, please contact martin.gruselle @btinternet.com.

Also, Jennifer Cummings, who has acted as Membership Secretary for many years would like to pass on the baton. To make the task easier we have just commissioned a new app, which means that no particular computer skills are required. This is an interesting and valuable contribution to the Society, as our members are the lifeblood of the Fry. Please contact Jennifer on 01223 892108 or jcummings@fryartgallery.org

For years some free parking in Castle Street was still possible just after the Museum Street junction. This has now been changed and the spaces require a permit.

An interesting series, Work of the Week, forms part of our website. Each Monday a new picture is posted, along with a notice relating to it. It mixes work that is in the Collection but not often on the walls, with those that we are familiar with but enjoy none the less. You can catch up on back editions as well.

Contributions on relevant topics for future editions of this Newsletter are welcome. Please contact the editor at nigel.weaver@fryartgallery.org

Gillian Lowndes (1936-2010)

The Gallery houses the North West Essex Collection of work by artists, sculptors, ceramisists and illustrators of national significance who have lived in and worked in the area that is principally focused on Great Bardfield, Saffron Walden and nearby villages.

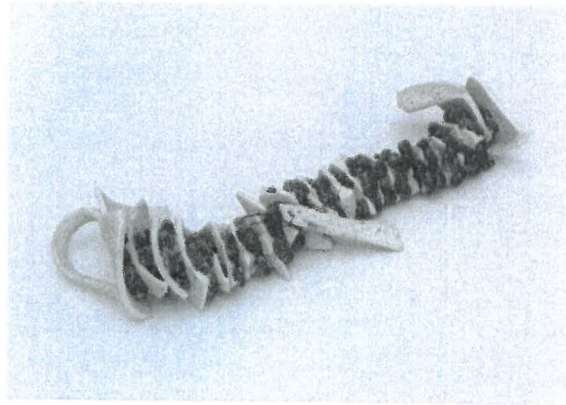
In recent years the ceramics side of the Collection has been developed and three ground-breaking potters and influential teachers, Ian Auld, Gillian Lowndes and Dan Arbeid have become part of the collected artists.

Auld lived in Wimbish near Saffron Walden from 1957 to 1966 when he joined Gillian Lowndes in a studio in Chippenham, and they became life partners, marrying in 1996. They travelled together to Nigeria in 1970 for eighteen months while he was a research fellow. During this period Lowndes was drawn to the affinity that appeared to exist between the Yoruba makers and their materials, and the combination that was made of different materials like glass beads and leather in single objects. "It changed my way of looking at ceramics fundamentally " she said. "I became less of ceramicist and more of a general maker of materials". Her development of the way materials were juxtaposed brought her reputation as a radical potter, and her inclusion in important ceramic collections.The term *bricolage*, derived from the French word for "tinker", describes how she brings together discarded objects before coating them in latex, fibreglass and clays and firing them. The couple later lived from 1988 to 2002 at Bradfields, Toppesfield,which,between 1952 and 1975 had been Ayrton's home. Auld died in 2000 and Lowndes moved to London in 2002

Arbeid lived in Wendens Ambo, Saffron Walden from 1960 until 1983 when he and his family moved to Brighton,. He died in 2010. While in Wendens Ambo he built a unique kiln in order to experiment with different types of firing that was not possible in London. Both Arbeid and Auld taught at various periods at the Central School of Arts & Crafts and Camberwell School of Art, where Auld became Head of Ceramics in 1974. As teachers they were as influential and innovative as they were in their own work, and paved the way for potters such as Sara Radstone, Ewen Henderson and Angus Suttie.

Lowndes also taught part-time, and her work is spoken of highly. Radstone defines her as "a liberating force, someone who has turned ceramics on its head and opened up the language of possibility." Ewen Henderson valued her " always looking and searching", and this is evident in the many distinctive groups of work she produced during her career. She herself said that "I want the works to look like they have been in a fire transformed by heat,. I want to give the domestic objects a totally different identity, make the familiar unfamiliar." and elsewhere she indicated that she wanted her work to be "elusive mysterious objects…it is up to the eye of the beholder to interpret, find meanings, and to assess."

In the North West Essex Collection there is a definite quality of the domestic in much of the work and the broken tea cup in the piece just acquired, bridging the gap as it does, between sculpture and craft fits well into its scene and invokes both challenge and admiration. ***Mug Sculpture,*** acquired with financial assistance from the Art Fund and the Victoria & Albert Museum Purchase Fund, carries the technical description - "Fired mixed media, broken china cup, metal staples and Egyptian paste, set with a small plaque dated 2000 AD "- is a good example of her work. Dated in the Toppesfield era her son has verified that it was made that year. Its arrival marks the beginning for the Collection of this trio of groundbreaking, innovative, influential and challenging potters and teachers who worked and lived in this part of rural Essex.



Mug Sculpture, 2000, Gillian Lowndes

Form of Proxy for the Annual General Meeting
of The Fry Art Gallery Society (the "Society")

Please complete, sign and return this form to reach the Hon. Secretary, Larkfield, Bawtree Crescent, Linton, Cambridge, CB21 4XQ by not later than 7.30 pm on 1st September 2021

Before completing this form, please read the explanatory notes

I/We being (a) member(s) of the Society hereby appoint the Chairman of the Meeting as my/our proxy to vote for me/us and on my/our behalf at the Annual General Meeting of the Society to be held on 20th October 2020 and at any adjournment thereof. I/we have indicated with an 'X' how I/we wish my/our votes to be cast on the following resolutions

RESOLUTIONS (please mark 'X' to indicate how you wish to vote – see also Notes 3 and 4)

		For	Against	Vote Withheld
3.	To re-elect Jennifer Cummings as a Trustee			
4.	To re-elect Philip Neale as a Trustee.			
5.	To re-elect Lesley Nolan as a Trustee			
6.	To re-elect John Ready as a Trustee			

To be completed in block capitals:

NAME .....

ADDRESS: .....

.....

SIGNATURE:.....

Date: 2021

Notes:

1. Every member has the right to appoint some other person(s) of their choice, who need not be a member, as their proxy to exercise all or any of his rights, to attend, speak and vote on their behalf at the Annual General Meeting. The completion and return of this Form of Proxy will not prevent you from attending in person and voting at the Meeting should you subsequently decide to do so.
2. If you wish your proxy to cast your votes for or against the resolution you should insert an "X" in the appropriate box. In the absence of instructions, your proxy may vote or abstain from voting as he or she thinks fit on the resolution and, unless instructed otherwise, may also vote or abstain from voting as he or she thinks fit on any other business (including on a motion to amend the resolution, to propose a new resolution or to adjourn the Meeting) which may properly come before the Meeting.
3. The "Vote Withheld" option is provided to enable you to instruct your proxy to abstain from voting on the resolution. A "Vote Withheld" is not a vote in law and will not be counted in the calculation of the proportion of the votes "For "or "Against" the resolution.
4. To be valid, this form of proxy, together with the power of attorney (if any) under which it is signed, or a notarially certified copy thereof, must be completed, signed and returned, either by post or delivered by hand, to the Hon. Secretary, Larkfield, Bawtree Crescent, Linton, Cambridge, CB21 4XQ by not later than 7.30 pm on 1st September 2021 or in the case of an adjourned meeting, not less than 48 hours before the time of the adjourned meeting.
5. Entitlement to vote at the Annual General Meeting will be determined by reference to the register of members of the Society as at 6.00 p.m. on 1st September 2021 or, if the Annual General Meeting is adjourned, on the register of members as at 6.00 p.m. on the date which is two working days before the date of such adjourned meeting. In each case, changes to the register of members of the Company after 6.00 p.m. on the relevant date shall be disregarded in determining the rights of any person to vote at the Annual General Meeting.
6. In the case of joint holdings, only one holder may sign and the vote of the senior who tenders a vote shall be accepted to the exclusion of the votes of the other joint holders, seniority for this purpose being determined by the order in which the names stand in the Register of Members in respect of joint holdings. Completion and return of this proxy will not preclude you from voting at the Annual General Meeting should you wish to do so.

THE FRY ART GALLERY SOCIETY

Regd Charity No 1167717

The fifth Annual General Meeting of the Society as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation will be held at The Friends Meeting House, High Street, Saffron Walden, CB10 1AA at 7.30pm on Friday 3rd September 2021.

AGENDA

1. **To receive the Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2020**

2. **Election of Trustees**
   At the meeting one-third (four) of the existing Trustees are required to resign, but may offer themselves for re-election. The following four Trustees (being the longest in office) are required to resign; all offer themselves for re-election:

   Jennifer Cummings Philip Neale
   Lesley Nolan John Ready

All Members are entitled to attend and vote at the meeting – either in person or by proxy. If you are unable to attend in person, but would like to vote, a Form of Proxy is enclosed which should be returned to the Secretary at the address stated thereon by not later than 1st September 2021.

Following the meeting there will be a talk by Alan Powers:

Re-cooking the Fry

Having worked on a new text for the third edition of ***Artists at the Fry*** introductory booklet, Alan Powers reflects on how the story of the Gallery and its artists can be viewed in different ways as it expands in scope.